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(54) **VESSEL SEALING INSTRUMENT**

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See application file for complete search history.

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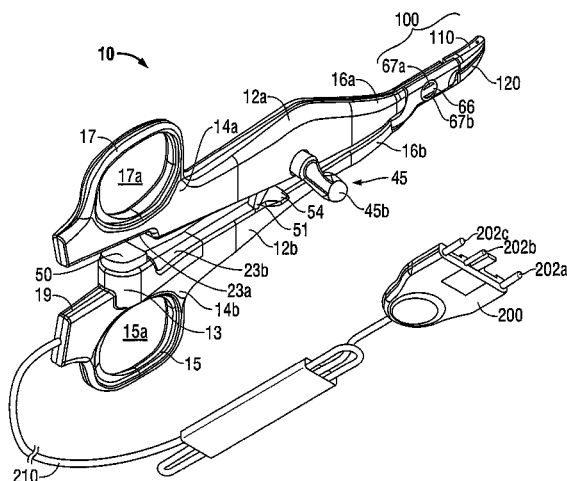
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A bipolar electrosurgical instrument includes a housing and an elongated shaft. An end effector is coupled to a distal end of the elongated shaft. A handle assembly includes a movable handle movable relative to a fixed handle for effecting movement of the jaw members from a first position to a second position. Each jaw member is configured to connect to a source of electrosurgical energy. A switch is disposed on the fixed handle and configured to be depressed between a first position and at least one subsequent position upon biasing engagement with a switch engaging surface disposed on the movable handle. The first position of the switch causes the relay of information to the user corresponding to a desired pressure on tissue grasped between the jaw members and the at least one subsequent position is configured to activate the source of electrosurgical energy.

7 Claims, 9 Drawing Sheets



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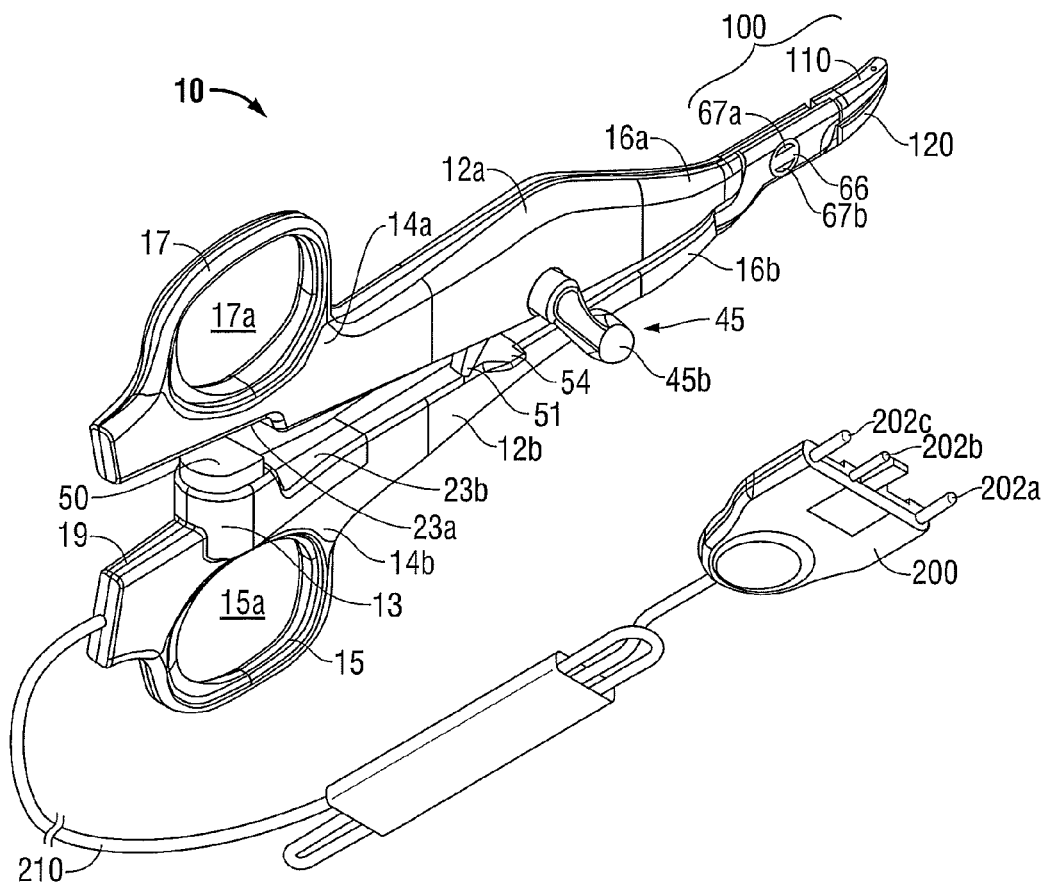


FIG. 1

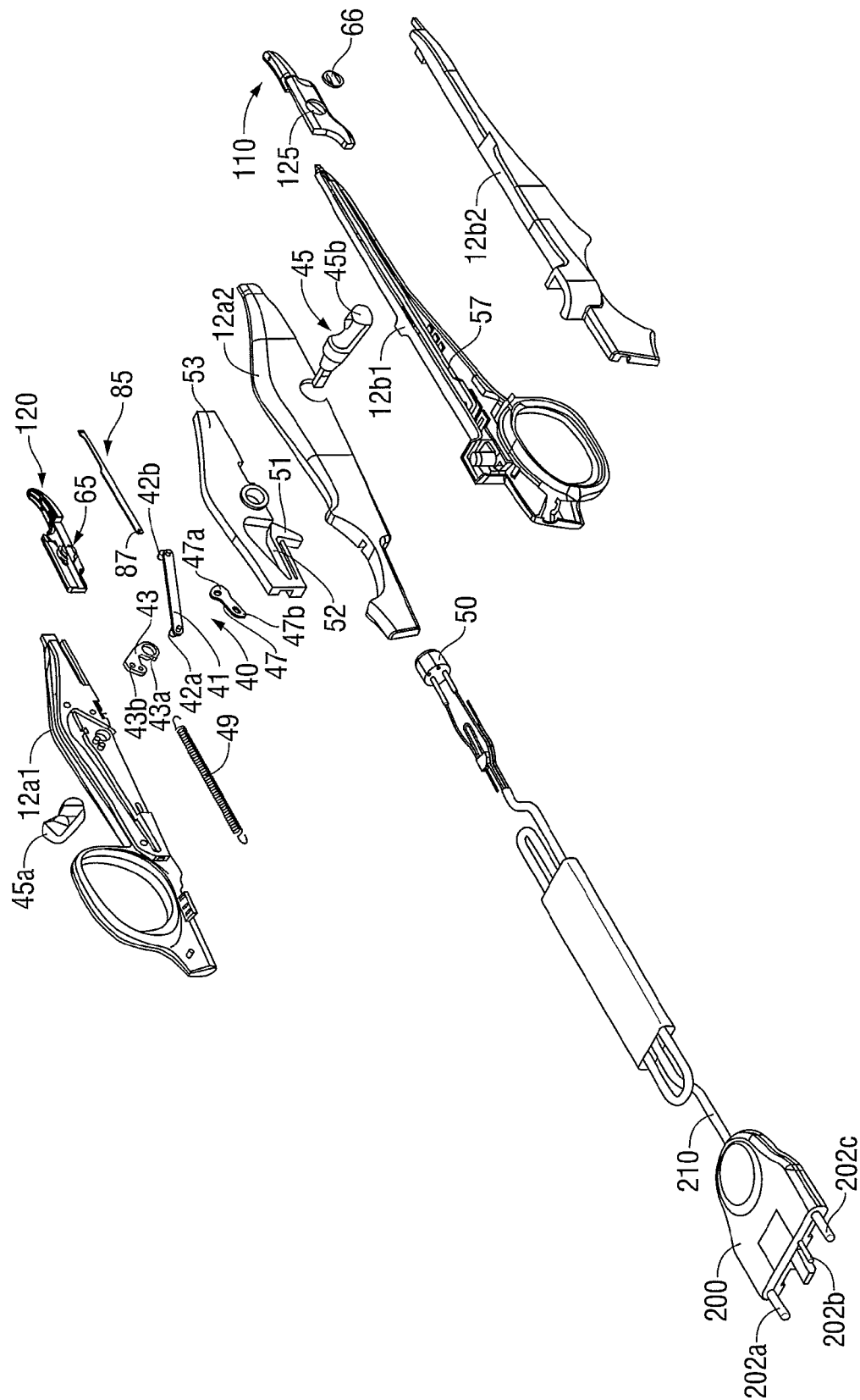


FIG. 2

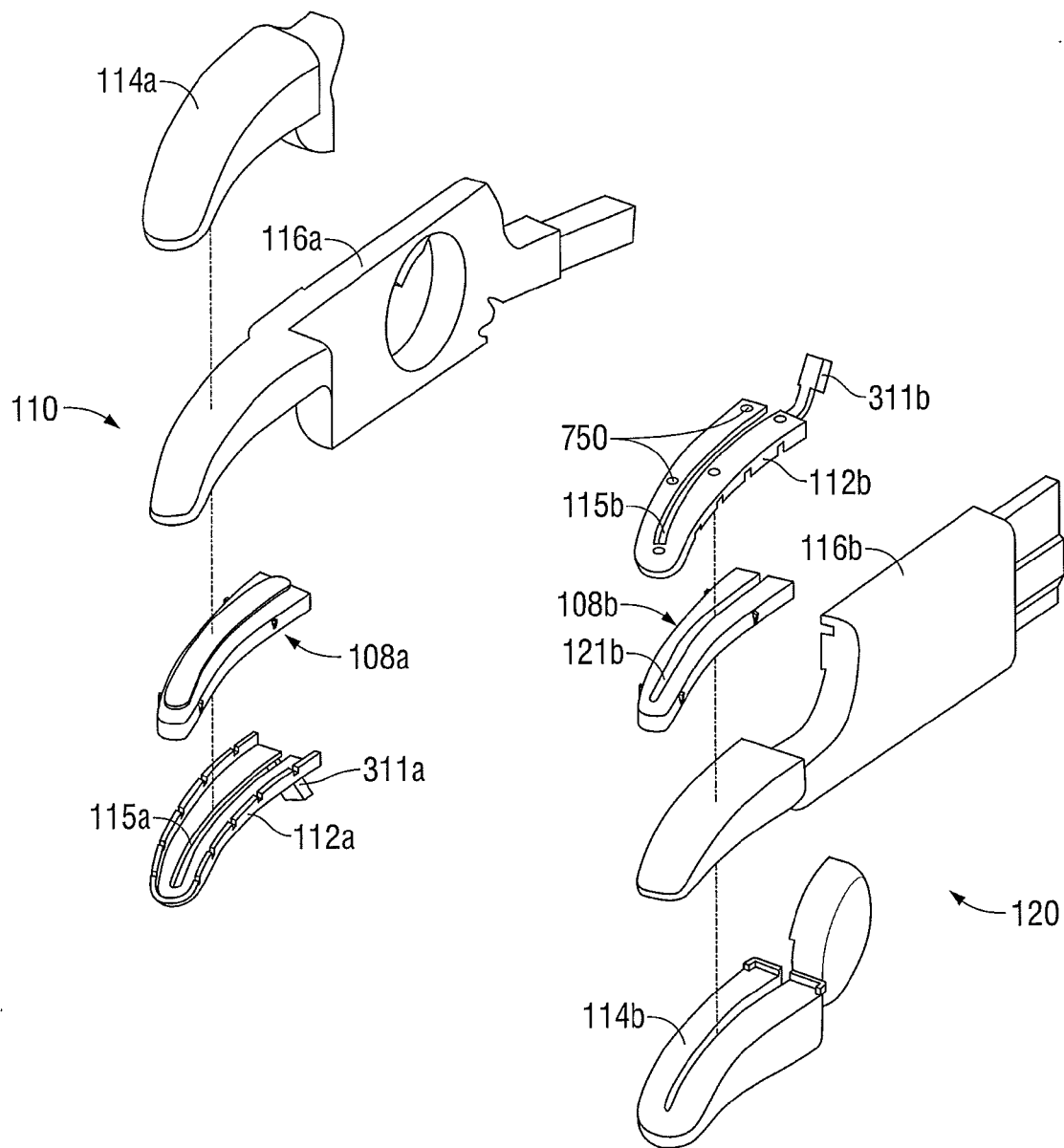


FIG. 3A

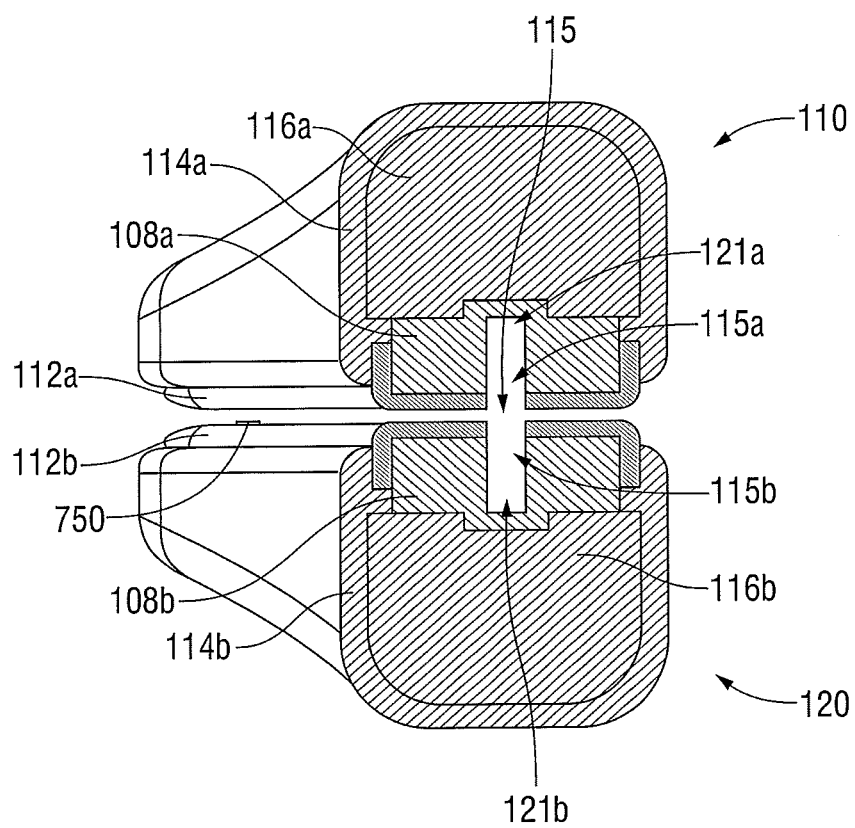


FIG. 3B

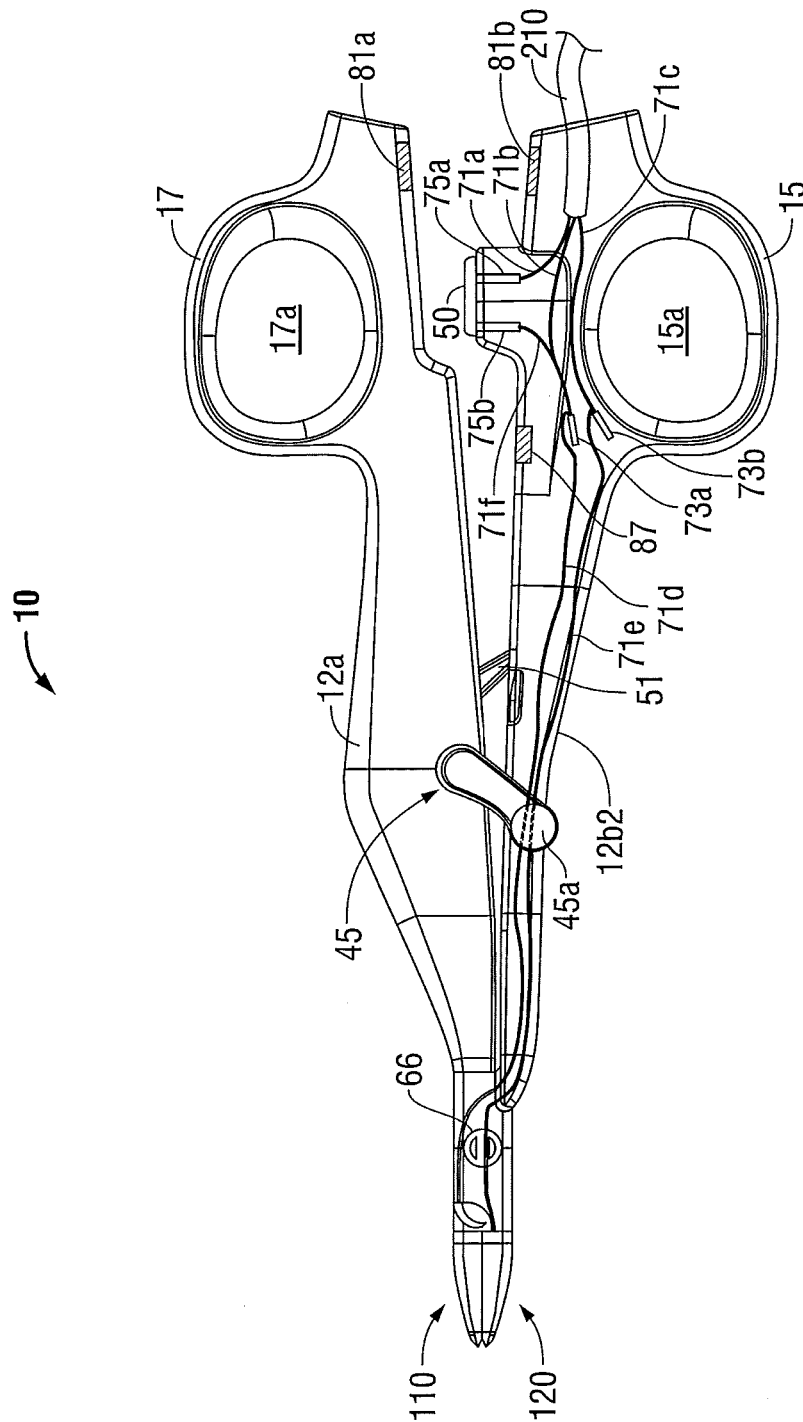


FIG. 4A

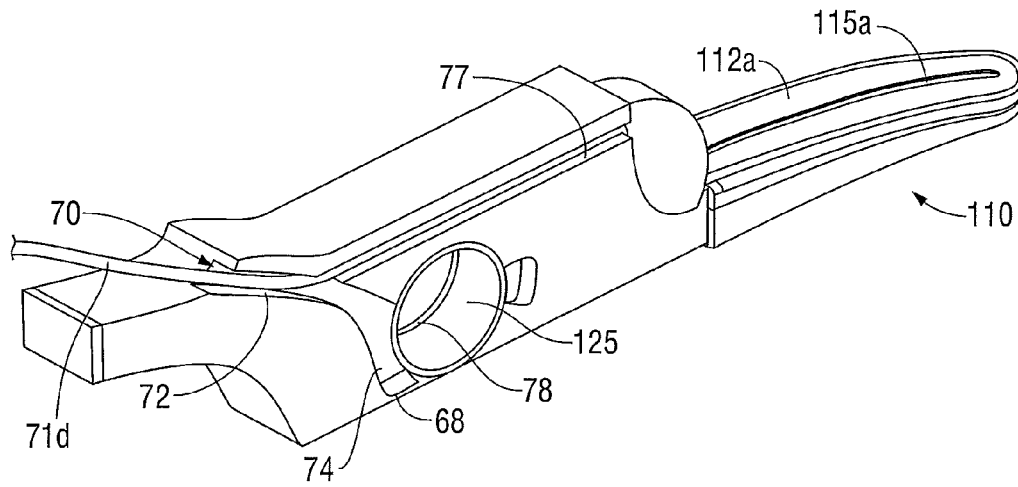


FIG. 4B

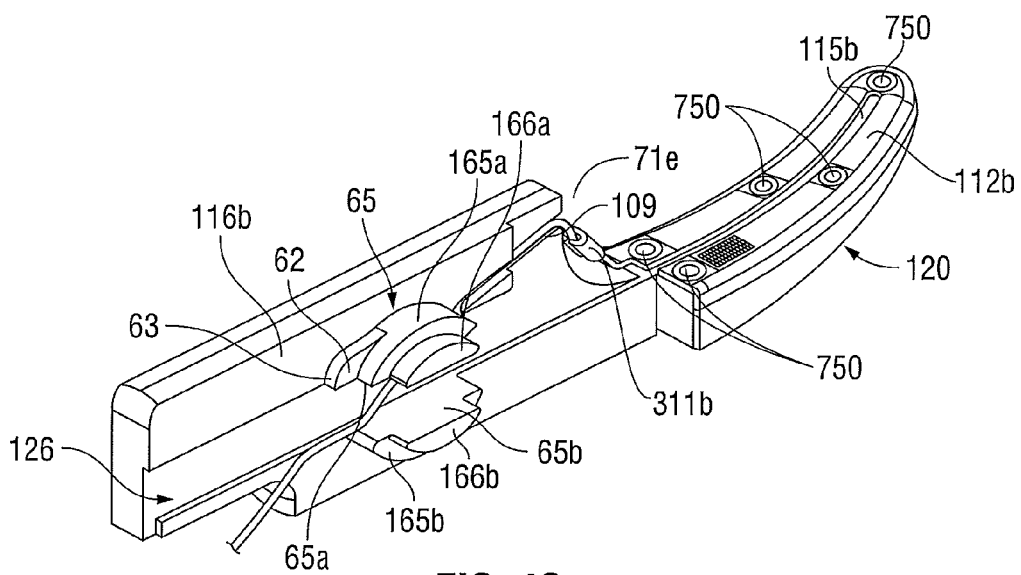


FIG. 4C

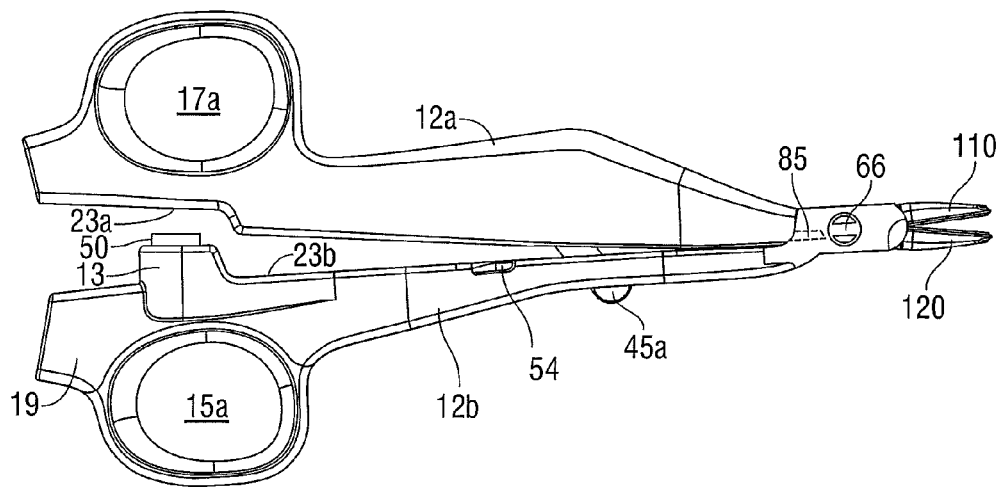


FIG. 5A

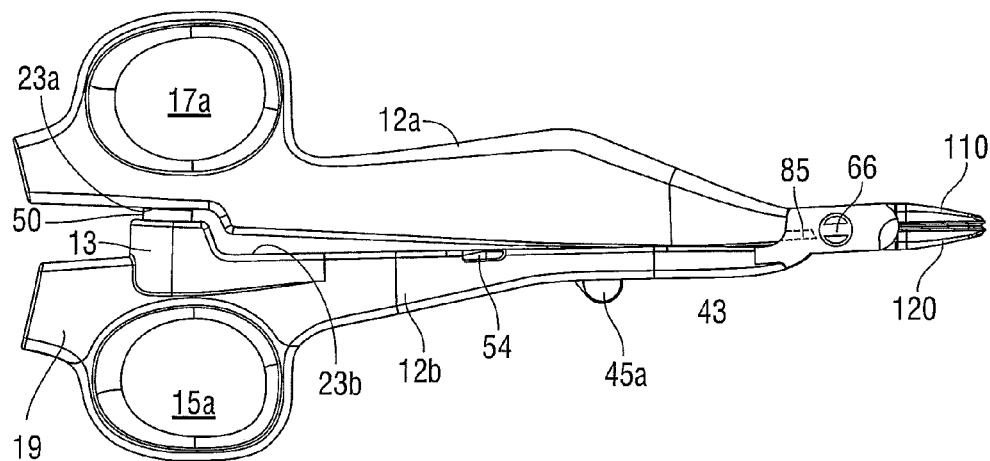


FIG. 5B

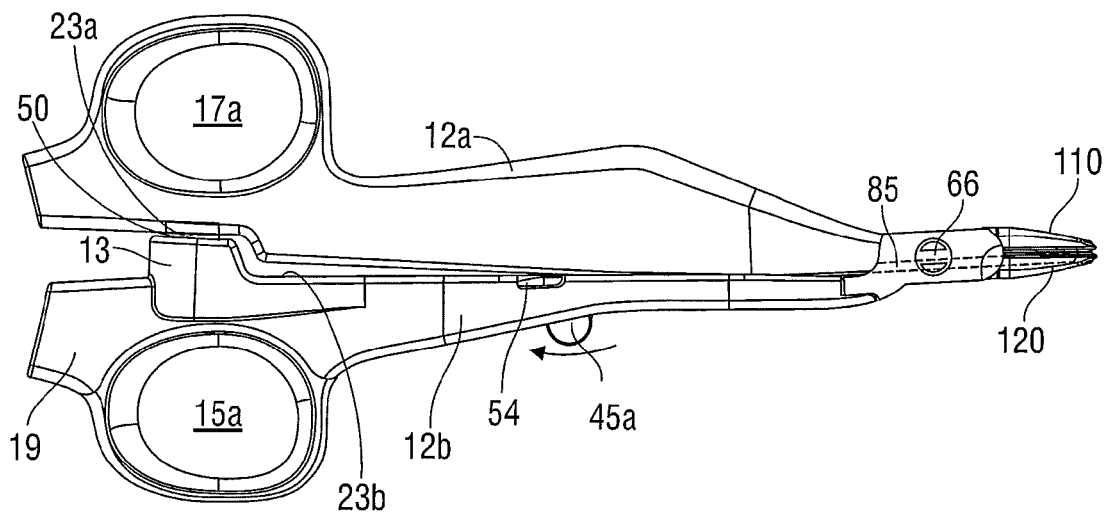


FIG. 5C

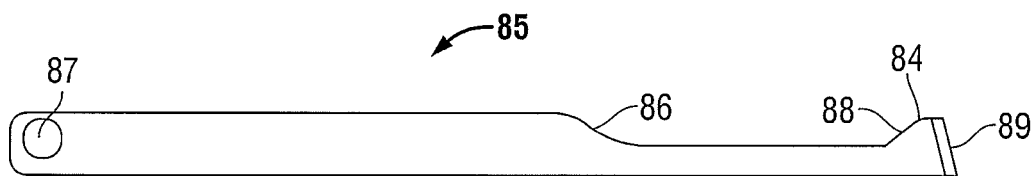


FIG. 6

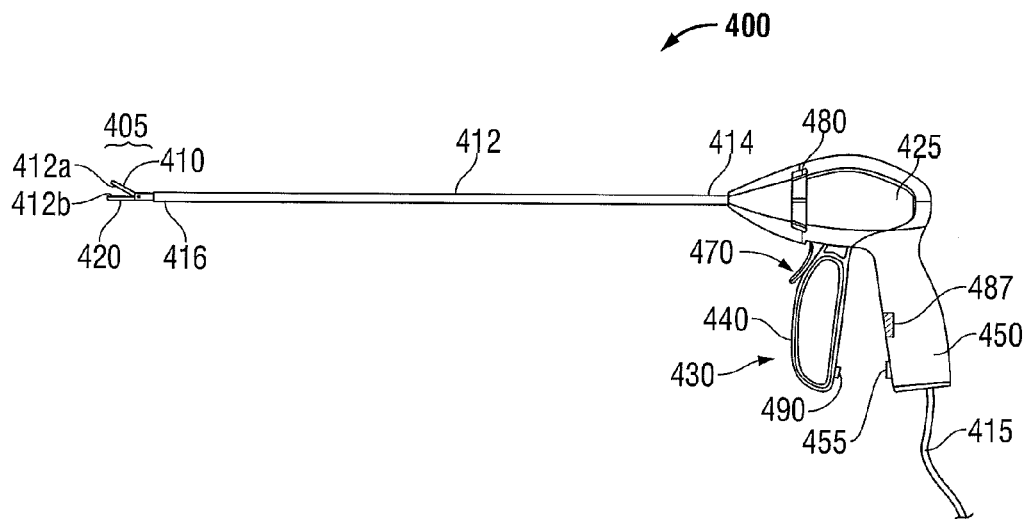


FIG. 7A

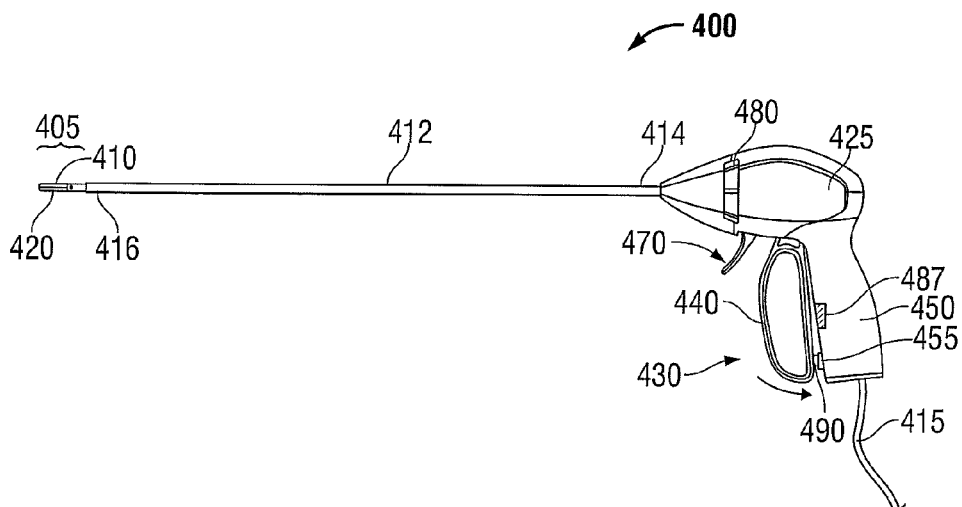


FIG. 7B

VESSEL SEALING INSTRUMENT

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

The present application is a continuation-in-part of a U.S. application Ser. No. 12/897,346 titled "Vessel Sealing Instrument" by Ryan C. Artale on Oct. 4, 2010, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND

1. Background of Related Art

The present disclosure relates to forceps used for open surgical procedures. More particularly, the present disclosure relates to a forceps that applies electrosurgical current to seal tissue.

2. Technical Field

A hemostat or forceps is a simple plier-like tool which uses mechanical action between its jaws to constrict vessels and is commonly used in open surgical procedures to grasp, dissect and/or clamp tissue. Electrosurgical forceps utilize both mechanical clamping action and electrical energy to effect hemostasis by heating the tissue and blood vessels to coagulate, cauterize and/or seal tissue.

Certain surgical procedures require sealing and cutting blood vessels or vascular tissue. Several journal articles have disclosed methods for sealing small blood vessels using electrosurgery. An article entitled Studies on Coagulation and the Development of an Automatic Computerized Bipolar Coagulator, J. Neurosurg., Volume 75, July 1991, describes a bipolar coagulator which is used to seal small blood vessels. The article states that it is not possible to safely coagulate arteries with a diameter larger than 2 to 2.5 mm. A second article is entitled Automatically Controlled Bipolar Electrocoagulation—"COA-COMP", Neurosurg. Rev. (1984), pp. 187-190, describes a method for terminating electrosurgical power to the vessel so that charring of the vessel walls can be avoided.

By utilizing an electrosurgical forceps, a surgeon can either cauterize, coagulate/desiccate, reduce or slow bleeding and/or seal vessels by controlling the intensity, frequency and duration of the electrosurgical energy applied to the tissue. Generally, the electrical configuration of electrosurgical forceps can be categorized in two classifications: 1) monopolar electrosurgical forceps; and 2) bipolar electrosurgical forceps.

Monopolar forceps utilize one active electrode associated with the clamping end effector and a remote patient return electrode or pad which is typically attached externally to the patient. When the electrosurgical energy is applied, the energy travels from the active electrode, to the surgical site, through the patient and to the return electrode.

Bipolar electrosurgical forceps utilize two generally opposing electrodes which are disposed on the inner opposing surfaces of the end effectors and which are both electrically coupled to an electrosurgical generator. Each electrode is charged to a different electric potential. Since tissue is a conductor of electrical energy, when the effectors are utilized to grasp tissue therebetween, the electrical energy can be selectively transferred through the tissue.

In order to effect a proper seal with larger vessels, two predominant mechanical parameters must be accurately controlled—the pressure applied to the vessel and the gap between the electrodes both of which affect thickness of the sealed vessel. More particularly, accurate application of the pressure is important to oppose the walls of the vessel, to reduce the tissue impedance to a low enough value that allows

enough electrosurgical energy through the tissue, to overcome the forces of expansion during tissue heating and to contribute to the end tissue thickness which is an indication of a good seal. It has been determined that a fused vessel wall is optimum between 0.001 and 0.006 inches. Below this range, the seal may shred or tear and above this range the lumens may not be properly or effectively sealed.

With respect to smaller vessel, the pressure applied to the tissue tends to become less relevant whereas the gap distance between the electrically conductive surfaces becomes more significant for effective sealing. In other words, the chances of the two electrically conductive surfaces touching during activation increases as the vessels become smaller.

Electrosurgical methods may be able to seal larger vessels using an appropriate electrosurgical power curve, coupled with an instrument capable of applying a large closure force to the vessel walls. It is thought that the process of coagulating small vessels is fundamentally different than electrosurgical vessel sealing. For the purposes herein, "coagulation" is defined as a process of desiccating tissue wherein the tissue cells are ruptured and dried and vessel sealing is defined as the process of liquefying the collagen in the tissue so that it reforms into a fused mass. Thus, coagulation of small vessels is sufficient to permanently close them. Larger vessels need to be sealed to assure permanent closure.

Numerous bipolar electrosurgical forceps have been proposed in the past for various open surgical procedures. However, some of these designs may not provide uniformly reproducible pressure to the blood vessel and may result in an ineffective or non-uniform seal. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 2,176,479 to Willis, U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,005,714 and 4,031,898 to Hildebrandt, U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,827,274, 5,290,287 and 5,312,433 to Boebel et al., U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,370,980, 4,552,143, 5,026,370 and 5,116,332 to Lottick, U.S. Pat. No. 5,443,463 to Stern et al., U.S. Pat. No. 5,484,436 to Eggers et al. and U.S. Pat. No. 5,951,549 to Richardson et al., all relate to electrosurgical instruments for coagulating, cutting and/or sealing vessels or tissue.

Many of these instruments include blade members or shearing members which simply cut tissue in a mechanical and/or electromechanical manner and are relatively ineffective for vessel sealing purposes. Other instruments rely on clamping pressure alone to procure proper sealing thickness and are not designed to take into account gap tolerances and/or parallelism and flatness requirements which are parameters which, if properly controlled, can assure a consistent and effective tissue seal. For example, it is known that it is difficult to adequately control thickness of the resulting sealed tissue by controlling clamping pressure alone for either of two reasons: 1) if too much force is applied, there is a possibility that the two poles will touch and energy will not be transferred through the tissue resulting in an ineffective seal; or 2) if too low a force is applied, a thicker less reliable seal is created.

SUMMARY

According to one aspect of the present disclosure, a bipolar electrosurgical instrument is provided. The instrument includes a housing and an elongated shaft extending from the housing. An end effector is coupled to a distal end of the elongated shaft. A handle assembly is operably coupled to the housing and includes a movable handle movable relative to a fixed handle for effecting movement of the jaw members relative to one another from a first position wherein the jaw members are disposed in spaced relation relative to one another to a second position wherein the jaw members coop-

erate to grasp tissue therebetween. Each jaw member is configured to connect to a source of electrosurgical energy such that the jaw members are configured to selectively conduct energy through tissue held therebetween to effect a tissue seal. A switch is disposed on the fixed handle and is configured to be depressed between a first position and at least one subsequent position upon biasing engagement with a switch engaging surface disposed on the movable handle. The first position of the switch causes the relay of information to the user corresponding to a desired pressure on tissue grasped between the jaw members and the at least one subsequent position is configured to activate the source of electrosurgical energy to supply electrosurgical energy to the jaw members.

Alternatively or in addition, a knife channel may be defined along a length of at least one of the jaw members and the electrosurgical instrument may include a cutting mechanism configured to reciprocate along the knife channel to cut tissue grasped between the jaw members.

Alternatively or in addition, the bipolar electrosurgical instrument may include an actuator for selectively advancing the cutting mechanism from a first position wherein the cutting mechanism is disposed proximal to tissue grasped between the jaw members to at least one subsequent position wherein the cutting mechanism is disposed distal to tissue grasped between the jaw members.

Alternatively or in addition, the switch may generate a first tactile response upon movement thereof to the first position and a subsequent tactile response upon movement thereof to the at least one subsequent position.

Alternatively or in addition, the desired pressure range may be measured by at least one strain gauge disposed within the forceps.

Alternatively or in addition, the first position of the switch may correspond to an initial closure pressure of the moveable handle relative to the fixed handle and the at least one subsequent position of the switch corresponds to a subsequent closure pressure of the movable handle relative to the fixed handle that is greater than the initial closure pressure.

Alternatively or in addition, the bipolar electrosurgical instrument may include a safety lockout configured to prevent reciprocation of the cutting mechanism when the jaw members are disposed in the first position.

Alternatively or in addition, each of the jaw members may include an electrically conductive sealing surface and at least one of the jaw members may include at least one non-conductive stop member disposed on the electrically conductive sealing surface configured to control the distance between opposing electrically conductive sealing surfaces when tissue is held therebetween.

According to a further aspect of the present disclosure, a bipolar electrosurgical instrument is provided. The instrument includes a housing and an elongated shaft extending from the housing. An end effector is coupled to a distal end of the elongated shaft. A handle assembly is operably coupled to the housing and includes a movable handle movable relative to a fixed handle for effecting movement of the jaw members relative to one another from a first position wherein the jaw members are disposed in spaced relation relative to one another to a second position wherein the jaw members cooperate to grasp tissue therebetween. Each jaw member is configured to connect to a source of electrosurgical energy such that the jaw members selectively conduct energy through tissue held therebetween to effect a tissue seal. A knife channel is defined along a length of at least one of the jaw members. A cutting mechanism is configured to reciprocate along the knife channel to cut tissue grasped between the jaw members. An actuator selectively advances the cutting mechanism

from a first position wherein the cutting mechanism is disposed proximal to tissue grasped between the jaw members to at least one subsequent position wherein the cutting mechanism is disposed distal to tissue grasped between the jaw members. A switch is disposed on the fixed handle and is configured to be depressed between a first position and at least one subsequent position upon biasing engagement with a switch engaging surface disposed on the movable handle. The first position of the switch causes the relay of information to the user corresponding to a desired pressure on tissue grasped between the jaw members and the at least one subsequent position is configured to activate the source of electrosurgical energy to supply electrosurgical energy to the jaw members.

Alternatively or in addition, the first position of the switch may correspond to an initial closure pressure of the first and second shafts and the at least one subsequent position of the switch may correspond to a subsequent closure pressure of the first and second shafts that is greater than the initial closure pressure.

Alternatively or in addition, the bipolar electrosurgical instrument may include a safety lockout configured to prevent reciprocation of the cutting mechanism when the jaw members are disposed in the first position.

According to a further aspect of the present disclosure, a method of performing an electrosurgical procedure is provided. The method includes the step of moving a first handle relative to a second handle of a bipolar forceps to grasp tissue between first and second jaw members. The method also includes the step of depressing a switch upon movement of the first shaft relative to the second shaft to a first position to relay information to a user corresponding to a predetermined grasping pressure applied to tissue grasped between the jaw members. The method also includes the step of depressing the switch to at least one subsequent position to activate a source of electrosurgical energy to supply electrosurgical energy to the jaw members.

The method may also include the step of selectively advancing a cutting mechanism from a first position wherein the cutting mechanism is disposed proximal to tissue grasped between the jaw members to at least one subsequent position wherein the cutting mechanism is disposed distal to tissue held between the jaw members.

The method may also include the step of generating a first tactile response corresponding to the first position of the switch.

The method may also include the step of generating a second tactile response corresponding to the at least one subsequent position of the switch.

In the drawings and in the description that follows, the term "proximal", as is traditional, will refer to the end of electrosurgical instrument that is closer to the user, while the term "distal" will refer to the end that is further from the user.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Various embodiments of the subject instrument are described herein with reference to the drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a right, perspective view of a forceps according to one embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 2 is an exploded view of the forceps of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3A is an exploded view of an end effector assembly of the forceps of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3B is a cross-sectional view of the end effector assembly of the forceps of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4A is a side view of the forceps of FIG. 1 with parts partially removed to show the electrical connection between a switch and the end effector assembly;

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FIG. 4B is a left, perspective view of a jaw member of the end effector assembly of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4C is a left, perspective view of a jaw member of the end effector assembly of FIG. 1; and

FIGS. 5A-5C are side views of the forceps of FIG. 1 illustrating actuation thereof between open and closed positions;

FIG. 6 is a side view of a knife for use with the forceps of FIG. 1 according to one embodiment of the present disclosure; and

FIGS. 7A and 7B are side views of forceps according to one embodiment of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring initially to FIGS. 1 and 2, a forceps 10 for use with open surgical procedures includes elongated shaft portions 12a and 12b each having a proximal end 14a, 14b and a distal end 16a and 16b, respectively.

The forceps 10 includes an end effector assembly 100 that attaches to the distal ends 16a and 16b of shafts 12a and 12b, respectively. The end effector assembly 100 includes pair of opposing jaw members 110 and 120 that are pivotably connected and movable relative to one another about a pivot 65 (FIG. 2) to grasp tissue. Pivot 65 is disposed on a proximal end of jaw member 120 and includes opposing halves 65a and 65b disposed on opposing sides of a channel 126 (FIG. 4C) that is configured to facilitate reciprocation of a cutting mechanism or knife 85 therethrough (FIG. 2), as discussed in detail below.

Each shaft 12a and 12b includes a handle 17 and 15, respectively, disposed at the proximal end 14a and 14b thereof. Each handle 15 and 17 defines a finger hole 15a and 17a, respectively, therethrough for receiving a finger of the user. Handles 15 and 17 facilitate movement of the shafts 12a and 12b relative to one another which, in turn, pivot the jaw members 110 and 120 from an open position wherein the jaw members 110 and 120 are disposed in spaced relation relative to one another to a clamping or closed position wherein the jaw members 110 and 120 cooperate to grasp tissue therebetween.

As best seen in FIG. 2, shaft 12a is constructed from two components, namely, 12a1 and 12a2, that are coupled together to form shaft 12a. Likewise, shaft 12b is constructed from two components, namely, 12b1 and 12b2, that are coupled together to form shaft 12b. In some embodiments, component halves 12a1 and 12a2 and component halves 12b1 and 12b2 are ultrasonically welded together at a plurality of different weld points and/or may be mechanically coupled together by any suitable method including snap-fitting, adhesive, fastened, etc.

The arrangement of shaft 12b is slightly different from shaft 12a. More particularly, shaft 12a is generally hollow to house the knife 85 and an actuating mechanism 40. The actuating mechanism 40 is operatively associated with a trigger 45 having handle members 45a and 45b disposed on opposing sides of shaft 12a to facilitate left-handed and right-handed operation of trigger 45. Trigger 45 is operatively associated with a series of suitable inter-cooperating elements (e.g., FIG. 2 shows a trigger link 43, a knife pushing link 41, a spring 49, and an anti-deployment link 47) configured to mechanically cooperate (not explicitly shown) to actuate the knife 85 through tissue grasped between jaw members 110 and 120 upon actuation of trigger 45. The spring 49 is coupled between the inner structure of shaft 12b and the trigger link 43. Knife pushing link 41 includes a proximal pivot pin 42a that is received in a friction-fit manner within a pivot aperture 43b defined through the trigger link 43

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and a distal pivot pin 42b that is received in a pivot aperture 87 (FIG. 6) defined through a proximal end of knife 85. The trigger 45 is operatively associated with the trigger link 43 such that rotation of the trigger 45 overcomes the biasing force of the spring 49 to rotate the trigger link 43 in a corresponding direction. The trigger link 43 mechanically cooperates with the knife pushing link 41 to reciprocate the knife 85 through a knife channel 115 (FIG. 3B). Upon release of the trigger 45, the force of the spring 49 automatically rotates the trigger link 43 counter clock-wise to retract the knife 85 proximally.

With reference to FIG. 1, the proximal end 14b of shaft 12b includes a switch cavity 13 protruding from an inner facing surface 23b of shaft 12b and configured to seat a depressible switch 50 therein (and the electrical components associated therewith). Switch 50 aligns with an opposing inner facing surface 23a of the proximal end 14a of shaft 12a such that upon approximation of shafts 12a and 12b toward one another, the switch 50 is depressed into biasing engagement with the opposing inner facing surface 23a of the proximal end 14a of shaft 12a.

As shown in FIG. 2, the actuating mechanism 40 includes a cover 53 disposed within the shaft 12a. The cover 53 includes a cantilever spring 52 extending distally from a proximal end thereof. A protrusion 51 is disposed on the distal end of cantilever spring 52 and extends from inner facing surface 23a of shaft 12a toward an opposing pad 54 disposed on inner facing surface 23b of shaft 12b (FIG. 1). Upon approximation of shafts 12a and 12b, protrusion 51 is engaged by pad 54 such that protrusion 51 is biased inward by virtue of the cantilever spring 52 toward shaft 12a to permit further approximation of shafts 12a and 12b and biasing engagement of switch 50 by the opposing inner facing surface 23a of the shaft 12a.

As shown in FIG. 1, an electrosurgical cable 210 having a plug 200 at its proximal end connects the forceps 10 to an electrosurgical generator (not shown). More specifically, the distal end of the cable 210 is securely held to the shaft 12b by a proximal shaft connector 19 and the proximal end of the cable 210 includes a plug 200 having prongs 202a, 202b, and 202c that are configured to electrically and mechanically engage the electrosurgical generator.

The tissue grasping portions of the jaw members 110 and 120 are generally symmetrical and include similar component features that cooperate to permit facile rotation about pivot 65 to effect the grasping and sealing of tissue. As a result, and unless otherwise noted, jaw member 110 and the operative features associated therewith are initially described herein in detail and the similar component features with respect to jaw member 120 will be briefly summarized thereafter.

With reference to FIGS. 3A and 3B, jaw member 110 includes an outer housing 116a, first and second non-conductive plastic insulators 108a and 114a, and an electrically conductive sealing surface 112a. The first and second insulators 108a and 114a are overmolded about jaw housing 116a in a two-shot overmolding process. More specifically, the first insulator 108a is overmolded about jaw housing 116a to electrically insulate the jaw housing 116a from sealing surface 112a and the second insulator 114a is overmolded about jaw housing 116a to secure the electrically conductive sealing surface 112a thereto. This may be accomplished by stamping, by overmolding, by overmolding a stamped sealing surface, and/or by overmolding a metal injection molded sealing surface. The jaw members 110 and 120 are made from a conductive material. In some embodiments, the jaw members

110 and 120 are powder coated with an insulative coating to reduce stray current concentrations during sealing.

As best shown by the cross-sectional view of FIG. 3B, electrically conductive sealing surface 112a of jaw member 110 is pronounced from the jaw housing 116a and the second insulator 114a such that tissue is grasped by the opposing electrically conductive sealing surfaces 112a and 112b when jaw members 110 and 120 are in the closed position.

Likewise, jaw member 120 includes similar elements that correspond to jaw member 110 including: an outer housing 116b, first and second plastic insulators 108b and 114b, and an electrically conductive sealing surface 112b that is pronounced from the jaw housing 116b and second insulator 114b. As described above with respect to jaw member 110, the first insulator 108b electrically insulates the jaw housing 116b from the sealing surface 112b and the second insulator 114b secures the sealing surface 112b to the jaw housing 116b. Insulators 114a and 114b extend along the entire length of jaw members 110 and 120, respectively, to reduce alternate or stray current paths during sealing. In some embodiments, each of sealing surfaces 112a and 112b may include an outer peripheral edge that has a radius such that each insulator 114a and 114b meets the respective sealing surface 112a and 112b along an adjoining edge that is generally tangential to the radius and/or meets along the radius.

As shown in FIGS. 3A and 3B, at least one of the jaw members, e.g., jaw member 120, includes at least one stop member 750 disposed on the inner facing surfaces of the electrically conductive sealing surface 112b and/or 112a. Alternatively or in addition, the stop member(s) 750 may be disposed adjacent to the electrically conductive sealing surfaces 112a, 112b or proximate the pivot 65. The stop member(s) 750 facilitate gripping and manipulation of tissue and to define a gap between opposing jaw members 110 and 120 during sealing and cutting of tissue. In some embodiments, the stop member(s) 750 maintain a gap distance between opposing jaw members 110 and 120 within a range of about 0.001 inches (~0.03 millimeters) to about 0.006 inches (0.015 millimeters).

As shown in FIG. 2, shaft 12b includes a beam 57 disposed therein and extending between handle 15 and jaw member 110. In some embodiments, the beam 57 is constructed of flexible steel to allow the user to generate additional sealing pressure on tissue grasped between the jaw members 110 and 120. More specifically, once end effector assembly 100 is closed about tissue, the shafts 12a and 12b may be squeezed toward each other to utilize the flexibility of the beam 57 to generate the necessary closure pressure between jaw members 110 and 120. In this scenario, the mechanical advantage realized by the compressive force associated with the beam 57 facilitates and assures consistent, uniform, and accurate closure pressure about tissue grasped between jaw members 110 and 120 (e.g., within a working pressure range of about 3 kg/cm² to about 16 kg/cm²). By controlling the intensity, frequency, and duration of the electrosurgical energy applied to the tissue, the user can seal tissue. In some embodiments, the gap distance between opposing sealing surfaces 112a and 112b during sealing ranges from about 0.001 inches to about 0.005 inches.

In some embodiments, the sealing surfaces 112a and 112b are relatively flat to avoid current concentrations at sharp edges and to avoid arcing between high points. In addition, and due to the reaction force of the tissue when engaged, each of jaw members 110 and 120 may be manufactured to resist bending, e.g., tapered along its length to provide a constant pressure for a constant tissue thickness at parallel and the

thicker proximal portion of the jaw members 110 and 120 will resist bending due to the reaction force of the tissue.

As shown in FIGS. 3A, 3B, 4B, and 4C, at least one of jaw members 110 and 120 includes a knife channel 115a and/or 115b, respectively, disposed therebetween that is configured to allow reciprocation of a knife 85 therethrough. In the illustrated embodiment, a complete knife channel 115 is formed when two opposing channel halves 115a and 115b associated with respective jaw members 110 and 120 come together upon grasping of the tissue. Each plastic insulator 108a and 108b includes a trough 121a and 121b, respectively, that aligns in vertical registration with an opposing knife channel half 115a and 115b, respectively, such that knife 85 does not contact or cut through plastic insulators 108a and 108b upon reciprocation through knife channel 115. In some embodiments, the width of knife channels 115a and 115b and their respective troughs 121a and 121b may be equal along an entire length thereof.

As best shown in FIG. 4A, the interior of cable 210 houses leads 71a, 71b and 71c. Leads 71a, 71b, and 71c extend from the plug 200 through cable 210 and exit the distal end of the cable 210 within the proximal connector 19 of shaft 12b. More specifically, lead 71a is interconnected between prong 202b and a first terminal 75a of the switch 50. Lead 71b is interconnected between prong 202c and a solder sleeve 73a which, in turn, connects lead 71b to an RF lead 71d and to a second terminal 75b of the switch 50 via a connector lead 71f. RF lead 71d carries a first electrical potential of electrosurgical energy from lead 71b to sealing surface 112a. Lead 71c is interconnected between prong 202a and a solder sleeve 73b which, in turn, connects lead 71c to an RF lead 71e. RF lead 71e carries a second electrical potential of electrosurgical energy from lead 71c to sealing surface 112b.

With reference to FIG. 4B, a lead channel 77 is defined in the proximal end of jaw member 110 to provide a pathway for lead 71d to connect to a junction 311a (FIG. 3A) extending from a proximal end of sealing surface 112a. A proximal end of lead channel 77 opens into a raceway 70 that includes a generally elongated configuration with a narrowed proximal end 72 and a broadened distal end 74 that defines an arcuate sidewall 68. Lead 71d is routed to follow a path through the proximal end 72 of raceway 70 and, further, through lead channel 77 for connection to junction 311a.

With reference to FIG. 4C, pivot halves 65a and 65b are disposed on opposing sides of channel 126 to facilitate translation of the knife 85 therethrough (FIGS. 5A-5C). Pivot halves 65a and 65b are disposed in a split spherical configuration and each include a respective base portion 165a and 165b that support an extension portion 166a and 166b thereon, respectively. Extension portions 166a and 166b are configured to engage correspondingly-dimensioned apertures 67a and 67b, respectively, disposed through a pivot plate 66 (FIG. 1) to pivotably secure jaw member 110 to jaw member 120. A lead channel 109 is defined in the proximal end of jaw member 120 to provide a pathway for lead 71e to connect to a junction 311b extending from a proximal end of sealing surface 112b. Lead 71e is routed to follow a path through raceway 70 and, further between opposing pivot halves 65a and 65b and through lead channel 109 for connection to junction 311b.

With reference to FIGS. 5A-5C, as the user applies closure pressure on shafts 12a and 12b to depress switch 50 (FIG. 5B), a first threshold is met corresponding to the closure force applied to switch 50 as a function of displacement of switch 50 that causes switch 50 to generate a first tactile response that corresponds to a complete grasping of tissue disposed between jaw members 110 and 120. Following the first tactile

response, as the user applies additional closure pressure on shafts **12a** and **12b** (FIG. 5C), a second threshold is met corresponding the closure force applied to switch **50** as a function of displacement of switch **50** that causes the switch **50** to generate a second tactile response that corresponds to a signal being generated to the electrosurgical generator to supply electrosurgical energy to the sealing surfaces **112a** and **112b**. More specifically, the second tactile response indicates closing of a normally open circuit between switch terminals **75a** and **75b** and, in turn, establishment of an electrical connection between leads **71a** and **71b**. As a result of the electrical connection between leads **71a** and **71b**, the electrosurgical generator senses a voltage drop between prongs **202b** and **202c** and, in response thereto, supplies electrosurgical energy to sealing surfaces **112a** and **112b** via leads **71d** and **71e**, respectively.

In one embodiment, the first tactile response indicates to the user that the maximum grasping pressure has been reached before end effector **100** is energized where the user is free to approximate, manipulate, and grasp tissue as needed. In this scenario, the second tactile response indicates to the user the electrosurgical activation of the end effector **100**. The switch **50** may include a plurality of other tactile responses between the above discussed first and second tactile responses and/or subsequent to the second tactile response that correspond to particular functions of the forceps **10** such as, for example, operation of the knife **85** and/or the actuation assembly **40**, operation of a safety lockout mechanism associated with the actuation assembly **40**, as discussed in detail below.

As shown in FIG. 4A, forceps **10** may include a gauge or sensor element **87** disposed within one or both of shafts **12a**, **12b** such that the clamping or grasping forces being applied to target tissue by end effector **100** may be measured and/or detected. For example, in some embodiments, sensor element **87** may be a strain gauge **87** operably associated with one or both jaw members **110**, **120**. Sensor element **87** may be one or more Hall effect sensors or strain gauges such as, for example, metallic strain gauges, piezoresistive strain gauges, that may be disposed within one or both of shafts **12a** and **12b** and/or within one or both of jaw members **110** and **120** to detect tissue pressure. Metallic strain gauges operate on the principle that as the geometry (e.g., length, width, thickness, etc.) of the conductive material changes due to mechanical stress, the resistance of the conductive material changes as a function thereof. This change in resistance is utilized to detect strain or applied mechanical stress such as, for example, the mechanical stress applied to tissue by jaw members **110** and **120**. Piezoresistive strain gauges operate based on the changing resistivity of a semiconductor due to the application of mechanical stress.

Hall effect sensors may be incorporated to determine the gap between jaw members **110** and **120** based on a detected relationship between the magnetic field strength between jaw members **110** and **120** and the distance between jaw members **110** and **120**.

In some embodiments, one or more reed switches **81a**, **81b** may be incorporated within shafts **12a** and **12b** to determine the proximity thereof relative to one another, as shown in FIG. 4A. More specifically, the reed switch(s) may be comprised of a switch **81a** disposed within one of the shafts (e.g., shaft **12a**) and a magnetic element **81b** (e.g., electromagnet, permanent magnet, coil, etc.) disposed upon the opposing shaft (e.g., shaft **12a**) such that upon approximation of shafts **12a** and **12b**, the reed switch **81a** is activated or closed by the magnetic field of the magnetic element **81b** and, likewise, as shafts **12a** and **12b** are moved away from each other, the lack of mag-

netic field operates to deactivate or open the reed switch **81a**. In this manner, the proximity of shafts **12a** and **12b** and thus, jaw members **110** and **120**, may be determined based on the reaction of the reed switch **81a** to the magnetic element **81b**.

Any of the above discussed sensors, switches, and/or strain gauge(s) may be incorporated within an electrical circuit such that the strain detected by the strain gauge changes the electrical signal through the circuit. With this purpose in mind, an electrical circuit between the strain gauge and the switch **50** and/or an electrosurgical generator (not shown) allows communication of information such as desired tissue pressure thereto. This information may be tied to the activation of switch **50** such that the switch is not activated until a desired and/or predetermined pressure on tissue grasped between jaw members **110** and **120** is achieved as detected by the strain gauge. Accordingly, the strain gauge may be disposed strategically on the forceps **10**, e.g., on one or more of jaw members **110**, **120**, such that pressure applied to tissue grasped between jaw members **110** and **120** affects the strain gauge.

In use, forceps **10** may be calibrated such that particular tactile responses (e.g., the first tactile response) of switch **50** corresponds to a predetermined grasping pressure on tissue as determined through use of one or more of the above discussed sensors, switches, and/or strain gauge(s). The predetermined grasping pressure about tissue is within the range of about 3 kg/cm² to about 16 kg/cm² in one embodiment and, in another embodiment, about 7 kg/cm² to about 13 kg/cm². In some embodiments, switch **50** may generate multiple tactile responses, each of which corresponds to different predetermined grasping force. For a more detailed discussion of force sensing and/or measuring devices such as load cells, strain gauges, etc., reference is made to commonly-owned U.S. application Ser. No. 11/409,154, filed on Apr. 21, 2006.

As shown in FIGS. 2, 4B, and 4C, the pivot **65** connects through an aperture **125** defined through jaw member **120** and matingly engages the pivot plate **66** seated within a circumferential lip or flange **78** (FIG. 4B) defined around the periphery of aperture **125** such that the pivot **65** is rotatably movable within the aperture **125** to move jaw members **110** and **120** between open and closed positions.

In some embodiments, actuation of the knife **85** is associated with activation of the switch **50**. For example, sensor **87** may be embodied as a position sensor configured to detect the position of knife **85** relative to jaw members **110** and **120** and/or relative to tissue held therebetween. Additionally or alternatively, sensor **87** may be configured to detect either of the first and second tactile responses of switch **50** and allow or prevent actuation of the knife **85** accordingly. For example, based on feedback from the sensor **87**, any one or more inter-cooperating elements or lockout mechanisms associated with the actuating mechanism **40** may be energized or de-energized to allow or prevent actuation of the knife **85**, as described in more detail below.

As shown in FIG. 6, knife **85** includes a step **86** that reduces the profile of the knife **85** toward a distal end thereof. The distal end of the knife **85** has a step **88** that increases the profile of the knife **85** toward a sharpened distal cutting edge **89**. The knife **85** includes a chamfered portion **84** where the sharpened distal cutting edge **89** meets the step **88** to facilitate smooth retraction of knife **85** through the knife channel **15**.

In some embodiments, the forceps **10** may include a safety lockout mechanism having a series of suitable inter-cooperating elements (e.g., anti-deployment link **47**, trigger link **43**) that work together to prevent unintentional firing of the knife **85** when the jaw members **110** and **120** are disposed in the open position. Generally, the anti-deployment link **47** mechanically cooperates with the trigger link **43** to prevent

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advancement of the knife **85** until the jaw members **110** and **120** are closed about tissue. More specifically, the anti-deployment link **47** includes an engagement tooth **47a** formed thereon that is releasably received within a notch portion **43a** formed in the trigger link **43** (FIG. 2) when the jaw members **110** and **120** are in the open position such that clock-wise rotation of trigger link **43** is prevented so that the knife **85** cannot be advanced distally when the jaw members **110** and **120** are in the open position (FIG. 5A). When the jaw members **110** and **120** are moved to the closed position as illustrated in FIG. 5B, the safety lockout mechanism automatically disengages to allow selective actuation of the knife **85**. More particularly, a pin (not shown) disposed on protrusion **51** is received within an aperture **47b** defined through anti-deployment link **47** to couple anti-deployment link **47** to protrusion **51**. In this way, upon closure of jaw members **110** and **120**, the protrusion **51** contacts the pad **54** and is biased inward toward shaft **12b**, thereby causing counter clock-wise rotation of protrusion **51** and, in turn, clock-wise rotation of the anti-deployment link **47** such that the engagement tooth **47a** is released from engagement with the notch portion **43a**. Disengagement of tooth **47a** from notch portion **43a** allows actuation of the trigger **45** to advance the knife **85** distally through knife channel **115** to cut tissue grasped between jaw members **110** and **120**. An example of a safety lockout mechanism for use with forceps **10** is described in commonly-owned U.S. application Ser. No. 12/896,100 entitled "Blade Deployment Mechanisms for Surgical Forceps", filed on Oct. 1, 2010.

In some embodiments, any one or more of the inter-cooperating elements of the safety lockout mechanism (e.g., anti-deployment link **47**) may be electrically interconnected to the switch **50** and include suitable electro-mechanical components (e.g., springs, rods, solenoids, etc.) configured to be energized via activation of the switch **50** (e.g., via any one of leads **71a**, **71b**, **71c**, **71d**, **71e**) to mechanically manipulate the safety lockout mechanism. For example, upon electrical conduction through leads **71d** and **71e** to energize the end effector **100**, the anti-deployment link **47** is energized to cause actuation thereof such that the safety lockout mechanism disengages to allow selective actuation of the knife **85**. In this scenario, by way of example, selective actuation of the knife **85** may be prevented until switch **50** has been depressed to generate at least the first tactile response.

Referring now to FIGS. 7A and 7B, a forceps **400** for use with endoscopic surgical procedures is shown in accordance with embodiments of the present disclosure. Forceps **400** operates substantially as described above with respect to forceps **10** (see FIGS. 1-6) and will only be discussed to the extent necessary to describe the differences between the embodiments.

Generally, forceps **400** includes a housing **425**, a handle assembly **430**, a rotating assembly **480**, and an end effector assembly **405** that mutually cooperate to grasp, seal, and divide tubular vessels and vascular tissue. The forceps **400** includes a shaft **412** that has a distal end **416** configured to mechanically engage the end effector assembly **405** and a proximal end **414** that mechanically engages the housing **425**.

The handle assembly **430** includes a fixed handle **450** and a movable handle **440**. Fixed handle **450** is integrally associated with housing **425** and handle **440** is movable relative to fixed handle **450**. Rotating assembly **480** is associated with the housing **425** and is rotatable in either direction about a longitudinal axis (not shown) defined by the shaft **412**. The housing **425** houses the internal working components of the forceps **400**.

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End effector assembly **405** is coupled to the distal end **416** of shaft **412** and includes a pair of opposing jaw members **410** and **420**. Jaw members **410** and **420** each include an electrically conductive tissue sealing surface **412a** and **412b**, respectively, disposed thereon. Movable handle **440** of handle assembly **430** is operably associated with the end effector assembly **405** through a suitable drive assembly (not shown) to impart movement of the jaw members **410** and **420** from an open position to a clamped or closed position. The drive assembly may be any suitable combination of mechanical, electrical, and/or electromechanical components disposed within the housing **425** and configured to operably associate the movable handle **440** with the end effector assembly **405** such that movement of the movable handle **440** relative to the fixed handle **450** effects movement of the jaw members **410** and **420**.

As substantially described above with respect to the jaw members **110** and **120**, at least one of the jaw members **410** and **420** includes at least one stop member (not explicitly shown) disposed on the inner facing surfaces of the electrically conductive sealing surface **412b** and/or **412a** to facilitate gripping and manipulation of tissue and to define a gap between the jaw members **410** and **420** during sealing and cutting of tissue. For example, the stop member(s) may maintain a gap distance between the jaw members **410** and **420** of about 0.001 inches (~0.03 millimeters) to about 0.006 inches (~0.15 millimeters).

An electrosurgical cable **415** is coupled at a proximal end to the fixed handle **450** and connects the forceps **400** to an electrosurgical generator (not shown). Electrosurgical cable **415** houses a plurality of electrical leads (e.g., leads **71a**, **71b** and **71c**) that cooperatively operate to supply electrosurgical energy to the electrically conductive sealing surfaces **412a** and **412b** as substantially described hereinabove with respect to electrosurgical cable **210** of FIG. 1.

Forceps **400** includes a switch **455** disposed on the fixed handle **450** that operates substantially as described above with respect to switch **50** of forceps **10** (see FIGS. 1-5C). Although depicted on a lower end of the fixed handle **450** in FIGS. 7A and 7B, switch **455** or a similar type switch may be disposed on any suitable location of the fixed handle **450** and, thus, FIGS. 7A and 7B are not intended to be limiting with respect to the location of switch **455** on the fixed handle **450**.

The lower end of the movable handle **440** includes a switch engaging surface **490** extending therefrom. The switch engaging surface **490** is disposed on a surface of the movable handle **440** that faces the fixed handle **450**. When the movable handle **440** is moved toward the fixed handle **450**, the switch engaging surface **490** substantially aligns with the switch **455** such that as the moveable handle **440** is moved or squeezed toward the fixed handle **450**, as indicated by the rotational arrow depicted in FIG. 7B, the switch **455** is depressed via biasing engagement with the switch engaging surface **490**. As the user applies closure pressure on the moveable handle **440** to depress the switch **455** (not explicitly shown), a first threshold is met corresponding to the closure force applied to the switch **455** as a function of displacement of the switch **455** that causes the switch **455** to generate a first tactile response that corresponds to a complete grasping of tissue disposed between jaw members **410** and **420**. Following the first tactile response, as the user applies additional closure pressure on the moveable handle **440** (not explicitly shown), a second threshold is met corresponding to the closure force applied to the switch **455** as a function of displacement of the switch **455** that causes the switch **455** to generate a second tactile response that corresponds to a signal being generated to the

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electrosurgical generator to supply electrosurgical energy to the jaw members **410** and **420**.

Engagement of the switch **455** by switch engaging surface **490** depresses the switch **455** to meet any one or more thresholds as a function of displacement of switch **455** that, as described above with reference to switch **50** of FIG. 1, causes the switch **455** to generate one or more tactile responses. Each tactile response corresponds to a particular condition. For example, the switch **455** may generate a first tactile response corresponding to a complete grasping of tissue sensed between jaw members **410** and **420** and a second tactile response upon additional depression of the switch **455** relative to the fixed handle **450** corresponding to a signal being generated to the electrosurgical generator to supply electrosurgical energy to the sealing surfaces **412a** and **412b**.

Although not explicitly shown, at least one of the jaw members **410** and **420** may include a knife channel that is configured to allow reciprocation of a knife therethrough as substantially described above with respect to the knife channel **115a** and/or **115b** and the knife **85** of FIGS. 1-6. Forceps **400** includes a trigger **470** operatively associated with a series of suitable inter-cooperating elements (not explicitly shown) configured to actuate the knife substantially as described above with respect to trigger **45** of FIGS. 1-6.

Substantially as described above with respect to the safety lockout mechanism of the forceps **10**, forceps **400** may include a safety lockout mechanism having a series of suitable inter-cooperating elements that work together to prevent unintentional firing of the knife when the jaw members **410** and **420** are disposed in the open position. By way of example, the forceps **400** may include inter-cooperating elements such as or substantially similar to the anti-deployment link **47** and trigger link **43** described hereinabove to prevent advancement of the knife until the jaw members **410** and **420** are closed about tissue as substantially described above with respect to the safety lockout mechanism of the forceps **10**. An example of a safety lockout mechanism for use with forceps **400** is described in commonly-owned U.S. application Ser. No. 12/896,100 entitled "Blade Deployment Mechanisms for Surgical Forceps," filed on Oct. 1, 2010.

In some embodiments, any one or more of the inter-cooperating elements of the safety lockout mechanism may be electrically interconnected to the switch **455** and include suitable electro-mechanical components (e.g., springs, rods, solenoids, etc.) configured to be energized via activation of the switch **455** to mechanically manipulate the safety lockout mechanism as substantially described above with respect to the switch **50** of the forceps **10**.

Substantially as described above with respect to the sensor element **87** of FIG. 4A, forceps **400** may optionally include a gauge or sensor element **487** disposed within either movable handle **440** or fixed handle **450** (depicted within fixed handle **450** in FIGS. 7A and 7B for illustrative purposes) such that the clamping or grasping forces being applied to target tissue by end effector **405** may be measured. For example, in some embodiments, the sensor element **487** may be a strain gauge operably associated with one or both jaw members **410**, **420**.

While several embodiments of the disclosure have been shown in the drawings, it is not intended that the disclosure be limited thereto, as it is intended that the disclosure be as broad in scope as the art will allow and that the specification be read likewise. Therefore, the above description should not be construed as limiting, but merely as exemplifications of particular embodiments. Those skilled in the art will envision other modifications within the scope and spirit of the claims appended hereto.

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What is claimed is:

1. A bipolar electrosurgical instrument, comprising:
 - a housing;
 - an elongated shaft extending from the housing and having a pair of opposed jaw members disposed at a distal end thereof;
 - a handle assembly operably coupled to the housing and including a movable handle movable relative to a fixed handle for effecting movement of the jaw members relative to one another between a first position wherein the jaw members are disposed in spaced relation relative to one another and a second position wherein the jaw members cooperate for grasping tissue therebetween, each jaw member configured to connect to a source of electrosurgical energy such that the jaw members are configured to selectively conduct energy through grasped tissue to effect a tissue seal, at least one of the jaw members including a knife channel defined along a length thereof;
 - a cutting mechanism configured to reciprocate within the knife channel;
 - a safety lockout configured to prevent advancement of the cutting mechanism when the jaw members are disposed in the first position; and
 - a switch disposed on the fixed handle and configured to be depressed to a first position and at least one subsequent position upon biasing engagement with the movable handle, wherein depression of the switch to the first position generates a tactile response indicating a grasping pressure and the at least one subsequent position of the switch is configured to activate the source of electrosurgical energy,
 wherein the safety lockout further includes:
 - an anti-deployment link;
 - a knife pushing link having a proximal end and a distal end coupled to a proximal end of the cutting mechanism; and
 - a trigger link coupled to the proximal end of the knife pushing link and configured to effect advancement of the cutting mechanism via the knife pushing link, wherein when the safety lockout is in a first position, the anti-deployment link is engaged with the trigger link to prevent rotation of the trigger link.
2. The bipolar electrosurgical instrument according to claim 1, wherein depression of the switch to the at least one subsequent position generates a subsequent tactile response.
3. The bipolar electrosurgical instrument according to claim 1, wherein the grasping pressure is measured by at least one strain gauge disposed within the bipolar electrosurgical instrument.
4. The bipolar electrosurgical instrument according to claim 1, wherein the first position of the switch corresponds to an initial closure pressure of the movable handle relative to the fixed handle and the at least one subsequent position of the switch corresponds to a subsequent closure pressure of the movable handle relative to the fixed handle that is greater than the initial closure pressure.
5. A bipolar electrosurgical instrument according to claim 1, wherein each of the jaw members includes an electrically conductive sealing surface and at least one of the jaw members includes at least one non-conductive stop member disposed on the electrically conductive sealing surface configured to control the distance between opposing electrically conductive sealing surfaces when the jaw members are disposed in the second position.

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6. A bipolar electrosurgical instrument, comprising:
 a housing;
 an elongated shaft extending from the housing and having
 a pair of opposed jaw members disposed at a distal end
 thereof;
 a handle assembly operably coupled to the housing and
 including a movable handle movable relative to a fixed
 handle for effecting movement of the jaw members rela-
 tive to one another between a first position wherein the
 jaw members are disposed in spaced relation relative to
 one another and a second position wherein the jaw mem-
 bers cooperate for grasping tissue therebetween, each
 jaw member configured to connect to a source of elec-
 trosurgical energy such that the jaw members are con-
 figured to selectively conduct energy through grasped
 tissue to effect a tissue seal;
 a knife channel defined along a length of at least one of the
 jaw members;
 a cutting mechanism configured to reciprocate within the
 knife channel to cut tissue grasped between the jaw
 members;
 an actuator for selectively advancing the cutting mecha-
 nism between a first position wherein the cutting mecha-
 nism is disposed proximal to the knife channel and at
 least one subsequent position wherein the cutting
 mechanism is disposed within the knife channel;
 a safety lockout configured to prevent advancement of the
 cutting mechanism when the jaw members are disposed
 in the first position; and

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a switch disposed on the fixed handle and configured to be
 depressed to a first position and at least one subsequent
 position upon biasing engagement with the movable
 handle, wherein depression of the switch to the first
 position generates a tactile response indicating a grasp-
 ing pressure and the at least one subsequent position of
 the switch is configured to activate the source of elec-
 trosurgical energy,

wherein the safety lockout further includes:

an anti-deployment link;

a knife pushing link having a proximal end and a distal end
 coupled to a proximal end of the cutting mechanism; and

a trigger link operatively associated with the actuator and
 coupled to the proximal end of the knife pushing link such
 that actuation of the actuator effects advancement of the cut-
 ting mechanism via the knife pushing link and the trigger link,
 wherein when the safety lockout is in a first position, the
 anti-deployment link is engaged with the trigger link to pre-
 vent rotation of the trigger link.

7. The bipolar electrosurgical instrument according to
 claim 6, wherein the first position of the switch corresponds to
 an initial closure pressure of the movable handle relative to
 the fixed handle and the at least one subsequent position of the
 switch corresponds to a subsequent closure pressure of the
 movable handle relative to the fixed handle that is greater than
 the initial closure pressure.

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